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ABSTRACT

The Oregon State Board of Education has rejected the use of cut-off scores on a proficiency test to establish minimum performance standards for high school graduation. Instead, each school district is required to specify--by local board adoption--minimum competencies in reading, writing, listening, speaking, analyzing, and computing. These requirements are to become effective with the graduating class of 1978. Furthermore, school districts are encouraged to take the responsibility for three other assessment requirements, as specified by the Oregon Minimum Standards Model. The requirements are: (1) identifying performance indicators for each graduation competency; (2) developing or selecting measures; and (3) establishing standards--how well, how many, what percentage, how often. The concept of local control in choosing minimum competencies is very strong. Several implementation problems have occurred because teachers were more oriented toward specifying school skills, rather than life skills as suggested by the Standards. Nevertheless, both school personnel and the general public view the Standards positively. The appendix includes excerpts from the Minimum Standards and an outline of Oregon graduation requirements. (Author/CP)

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Establishing Proficiency Standards

for

High School Graduation

By

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INTRODUCTION

Demands from a variety of constituencies for accountability in education seem to have coalesced into an idea that has spread at what can only be called an astounding rate. "Competency-based" education is apparently an idea whose time has come--or so it would seem. Mandates for competency-based requirements, including competency (or proficiency) testing, continue to emanate from state legislatures and boards of education. To many people, aroused by charges that schools teach skills nd knowledge of little subsequent use, the rhetoric for competency-based education has a strong intrinsic appeal--after all, we do want our schools to produce graduates who are competent, don't we? But why refer to it merely as an idea, rather than a concept or a theory? Because there really are no uniform logical bases from which competency-based education is derived.

Spady, in his paper "Competency Based Education: A Bandwagon in Search of a Definition," notes that:

> Aside from universal beliefs in the desirability of school system accountability and student "competence," the adherents and practitioners of current elementary and secondary school CBE efforts are marching (or parading) in different uniforms to different drummers playing different tunes.[1]

Indeed, there is little agreement among educators as to what a "competency" is. In many parts of the country "competency" seems to be equated with mastery of the basic skills of reading, writing, and computing. In others, such as Oregon, competencies required for high school graduation refer to the ability to apply basic skills in life role related situations.

A QUESTION OF STANDARDS

Although this situation appears awkward at best, the consequences that follow are even more troublesome. As Popham[2] points out, if we decide to equate

certain skills or capabilities to "minimum competency," and we have an educational system based on them, we must assume that "competency" can be promoted as a consequence of instructional intervention. If uninstructed students don't possess the desired skills or capabilities and properly instructed students do, we need to be able to demonstrate that fact with appropriate and adequate measurement techniques. Furthermore, we are sometimes asked to specify minimum performance standards for those skills or capabilities that we are calling competencies. It is precisely at this point, that competency-based education seems to be foundering on the shoals of a rather ancient reef.

There are two ways we can look at performance standards. The question, "Can the students in this PE class high jump four feet," can be answered by setting the bar at four feet and finding out by means of a performance test how many students can or cannot clear the bar. But the question could also be asked "How high can each student in this class jump?" Similarly adding combinations of single digit numbers between zero and ten with 95 percent accuracy, is a task that students either can or cannot do. But we usually view addition (or multiplication, or spelling, or reading comprehension) as a skill area, or domain, within which the student can demonstrate a wide range of <u>levels</u> of proficiency. The immediately obvious question that arises when someone asks us to specify a particular level of proficiency to be used as a minimum standard is, "Minimum for whom, and for what purpose?" Why set the bar at four feet? Is it possible to establish uniformly fair and objective minimum performance standards?

Standards are not <u>a priori</u> givens--They are somewhat arbitrarily set by someone responsible for making a decision. Unfortunately, this arbitrary element can

never be completely eliminated from the decision. Gene Glass, after examining this question extensively, said:

> I have read the writings of those who claim the ability to make the determination of mastery or competency in statistical or psychological ways. They can't. At least, they cannot determine "criterion levels" or standards other than arbitrarily.[3]

He's right. There is no rationale, statistical or other, by means of which standards may be deduced. This, of course, is not a new problem, by any means. What classroom teacher among us has not had occasion to agonize over this very question at the end of a grading period? And did it not come down to a professional judgment as to what constituted a minimum standard? To use an Aristotelian distinction, the problem is not within the realm of the theoretical, but rather the realm of the practical. It is clearly a policy decision. The real question at issue, then, is how to make our judgments, both in determining standards and measuring performance, realistic and practical.

PROFICIENCY TESTING

Trying to reduce the arbitrariness of standard setting by appealing to the objectivity of a test score is like searching for the end of the rainbow. One set of judgments is merely traded for another set of judgments. This situation may be potentially more dangerous because of apparent "objectivity." Objective data tends to depersonalize the situation so that the decision maker is further removed from the personal agony of the decision. Two recent articles in the Journal of Educational Measurement dealing with the question of how to increase the precision and consistency of decisions in criterion referenced testing illustrate this point.[4] The articles were well done. They used painstakingly elaborate statistics to arrive at well supported conclusions. But the very elegance and mathematical precision of their presentations tended to make the reader lose track of the fact that neither article provided any insight whatsoever on how to decide where to draw the line defining minimum performance.

The depersonaliation of the cut-off score decision is even more profound when the proficiency test is administered on a state, or total school district level. Such tests may be appropriate in measuring the abilities of school systems to perform their functions, but I would argue that they are not appropriate for making judgments about individual students. I was impressed by the insight of California State Assemblyman Leroy F. Greene who wrote in the Summer 1977 issue of Compact:

> Large scale assessments should not identify any pupil participating in such assessment, but rather should serve as a tool for measuring the educational progress of schools, school districts and the state's educational system----State level assessments are not a proper instrument for diagnosing the needs of an individual student or for determining whether a student should be promoted, retrained, or graduated. The student is a unique human being.
>
> The parents of our students want to know how well their young are performing, what they are learning and how it will help make their children more responsible, more capable, better adjusted, thinking, feeling, empathetic, human beings. For this we need individualized assessment.[5]

This is not to say that item by item performance data from state level tests cannot be useful for individuals as well as classroom teachers and school administrators. To the contrary. But large scale proficiency exams tend to utilize cut-off scores. And no matter how precisely or reliably, a total score is assigned to an individual, it tends to obscure more than it reveals. Scores tend to portray people unidimensionally. (e.g., A raw score of 30 out of 60 questions is typically viewed merely as one half of a sixty unit vector quantity. The score on a computation test does not reveal whether the student answered all addition and subtraction problems correctly but missed all multiplication problems or whether the student answered all the easy problems correctly and missed all the hard problems. Or perhaps, the first half of the problems were all answered correctly and test was unfinished.) Even if you narrow the test in the scope of its content coverage; i.e., make it criterion

referenced, items still differ from one another in relative difficulty. How would you interpret the score if you knew that the student answered all the difficulty problems correctly and simply skipped over the easy ones? People, of course, are not unidimensional and tests are not context free. Different people with different social, cultural, or ethnic backgrounds may interact differently with a given set of test items. It is clear that in making decisions about students which may affect the rest of their lives, the most careful kind of individualized measurement procedures must be used. Even if we could imagine a way of producing a test score that was truly representative of an individual's level of proficiency in some particular skill, the most precise and reliable testing technology imaginable would never tell us what performance level was minimally acceptable because minimums are set. It is essentially a politically motivated policy decision.

Consider some points from Harman's 1975 paper on the "Right to Read." He quotes a study showing that military cooks do tasks which would require a minimum of seventh grade reading, repairmen eighth grade and supply clerks tenth grade. The study concluded that most other military professions would require a minimum of an eleventh grade reading level and that these correlated significantly with similar civilian jobs. He goes on to say that:

> Several investigations conducted over the past few years indicate that inability to read is far more widespread than figures such as these might lead us to believe. The most recent of these studies, following an analysis of actual reading tasks considered perfunctory, indicated that nearly 22% of the population could not read well enough to perform them while an additional 32% tested as being able to master these tasks only marginally. Together a staggering 54% were shown to be unable or only marginally able to cope with basic reading tasks...[6]

Can the reader imagine a school district setting a standard such that only 54 percent would be unable to pass it? Or even 22 percent? Of course not--taxpayers would not tolerate such a situation. Now, if you believe that, given the way schools are now organized, reading levels are approximately normally distributed according to almost any measure that is used, then 16 percent of all high school seniors are more than one standard deviation below the "twelfth grade level," and could be considered marginal readers.

Would a district tolerate a 16 percent failure rate? The answer is still no. How would students be remediated? How much would it cost? Bloom[7] has suggested that if present time constraints in schools were relaxed so that slower students could receive more individualized instruction over a longer period of time, 80 percent of all students would be able to reach the level of achievement ordinarily graded A. Perhaps policymakers who are considering the establishment of minimum proficiency levels for high school graduation should take his suggestions more seriously.

THE OREGON "MODEL"

Before I describe for you the way the State of Oregon has approached the problem of setting minimum requirements, let me assure you that this system has certainly not solved all the problems. I'm afraid the water gets deep just about as fast from this angle as from any other. Let me first describe the way the system is supposed to operate, then share with you some of the problems encountered in trying to make it work.

For the purpose of this paper we shall examine only the measurement rubric, not the content to be measured. It should be kept in mind that Oregon students are required to meet minimum competency requirements <u>in addition to</u> the more traditional requirements of course credit and length of time in school.

In its Elementary-Secondary Guide for Oregon Schools, Part I, Minimum Standards for Public Schools (adopted in June 1976) the Oregon State Board of Education defined a high school minimum graduation competency as:

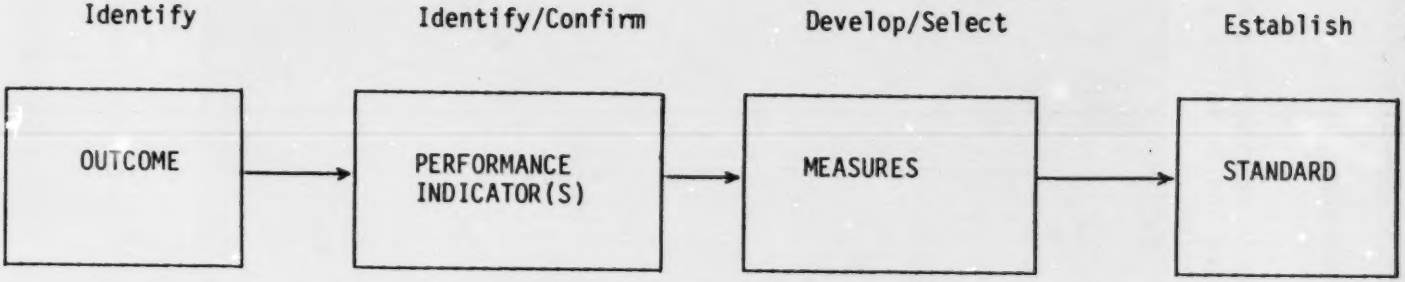
> A statement of desired student performance representing demonstrable ability to apply knowledge, understanding and/or skills assumed to contribute to success in life role functions.[8]

Each local school district in the State of Oregon is required to specify by local board adoption, minimum competencies in the areas of reading, writing, listening, speaking, analyzing and computing, to become effective with the graduating class of 1978. Implementation in seven other areas is to be phased in at a later date. Local districts are also asked (see excerpts from the Minimum Standards in Appendix A) to state performance indicators for each of their required graduation competencies. Districts were allowed to develop their own verification and record keeping systems for checking off performance indicators and/or competencies. However, they were encouraged in various Department publications to develop measures for each performance indicator and standards for each of their measures. This simplistic general assessment model is diagrammed in Exhibit I. The Minimum Standards thus attempt to establish a procedure whereby the policy decision as to where to set performance minimums is in the hands of the local district, but in such a way that the decision must be negotiated with the local community. The measurement problem now becomes one of establishing a system of applied performance testing that is uniform and consistent across teachers within a school, from school to school within a district, and to a certain extent, from one district to another.

The rationale for this system goes something like this. If the purpose of the competency requirement is to insure that high school graduates can function in terms of their ability to apply basic skills in life-related situations, then

EXHIBIT I

Components Necessary for Assessment



- goal (course, program, district)
- competency

- what will be required as evidence to verify the outcome has been attained?

- test items
- applied performance test
- observation schedule
- rating scale
- checklist

- how well
- how many
- what %
- how often

the appropriate level of proficiency should be derived from those situations. But what is "appropriate" for one context in one community may not be considered appropriate in other contexts by other communities. Consider the Harmon paper again. What levels of reading or computing skills are needed by an individual to function as a consumer, producer, or citizen? To what extent is an individual limited in a job or profession by their level of proficiency in the basic skil's? How important is it that an individual be able to read a newspaper? Write a letter of application for a job? Balance a checkbook? Compute interest rates on a time-purchase contract? Or to locate some needed information in the local library? The position taken by the Oregon State Board of Education is that these questions are most appropriately answered at the level of the local community.

In addition to deciding what levels of proficiency are appropriate within each competency area, local districts must determine what kinds of performance will be accepted as evidence that an individual student has attained the specified minimum competency level. Local districts may alter performance indicators or grant waivers to substitute competencies appropriate to unique needs and abilities of individual students (handicapped students, for example). The local board may also grant a certificate identifying competencies acquired to students having met some but not all requirements for the diploma who choose to end their formal school experience. And, it is within the authority of the district to allow students to take more time (or less time) than usual to complete high school graduation requirements.

The reader will notice that this system does not change local prerogatives as to who to graduate and who not to graduate so much as it opens the entire process up to much more direct public scrutiny! The concept of local control is very strong in the State of Oregon.

SOME IMPLEMENTATION PROBLEMS

In response to the state requirements, most districts in Oregon have devised systems within which teacher judgment still plays the dominant role. Some districts chose to utilize a district level testing program in some areas, teacher judgment in others. One situation which frequently rose in early stages seemed to result form the proclivity of teachers for writing what Brickell[9] calls "school skills" rather than "life skills" as implied by the Standards. Many districts used teacher committees to generate their competency lists. These committees produced large numbers of outcome statements at a behavioral objective level of specificity. (Each teacher of a basic skill related course seemed to feel that practically all of the content of their course must be minimal!) Thus they promptly bogged down under the need for massive record keeping systems. A related problem that arose was that of trying to keep such a system from focusing excessively on minimum requirements to the detriment of other course requirements.

One problem occurring in the early phases of the implementation of the requirement was that teacher committees, working in advance, set performance standards that many students could not reach as the school year progressed. They tended to set higher standards then they were actually willing to accept in their own classrooms. Hence a question quickly arose as to how these students would receive remediation. The problem was particularly annoying to teachers in districts where competencies had been stated at such a level of specificity that it was difficult for them to distinguish between competencies, performance indicators, and measures. This produced such limited latitude in verification procedures that remediation could take no form other than literally teaching to "the test." Many of these problems have resolved themselves as districts have moved to fewer competency statements at more general levels of specificity.

Another concern that arose focused on the question of how early a competency could be verified, and whether or not the district was accountable if a competency was verified at say, grade eight, but the student did not retain the competency until graduation. But the concern that still seems to be bothering districts more than any other is the issue of the student who transfers from one school system to another. Because of the wide variety in number, level of specificity, and standards for verification within competency areas, districts seem to be having a great deal of trouble deciding whether a student who transfers into their system has or has not completed their competency requirements. (This is particularly interesting, since one could argue that schools have been accepting course credit from other schools for years with little assurance that course content was the same. Apparently, the more explicit character of the new verification process raises concerns that were easier to ignore under previous systems.)

As local districts revise their competency requirements to be more life-skill oriented, these problems are becoming less troublesome. One theme, however, seems to continue to run through most discussions with local district administrators. Many of the same people who were most outspoken in favor of "local control" in choosing minimum graduation competencies are now asking the state to mandate a uniform set of minimum competencies. They would prefer to choose their own performance indicators, measures and standards. This would still leave the standard setting policy decision where they feel it belongs--in the hands of the local community.

IN CONCLUSION

The Oregon State Board of Education has specifically rejected the notion of utilizing cut-off scores on a proficiency test to establish minimum performnce standards for high school graduation. Instead, districts have been asked to utilize an applied performance testing model, within which minimum performance levels are set by local districts, open to public scrutiny and subject to public approval. Judgments as to the proficiency of individual students under this system, are kept as close to the classroom level as possible, so that humane application of standards is most likely.

A number of problems have been encountered in the process of implementing the Oregon system. But comments made in a series of discussion meetings held recently across the state indicate that school personnel, as well as the general public, are convinced that the system which has evolved is taking education in Oregon in the general direction it ought to go.

FOOTNOTES

1. Spady, W. G., "Competency Based Education: A Bandwagon in Search of a Definition," Educational Researcher, January 1977.

2. Pophan, W. James, "Testing for Mastery of Minimums," a paper given at the June 1977 NAEP Conference in Boulder, Colorado.

3. Glass, Gene V., "Standards and Criteria," a monograph distributed to participants in advance of the June 1977 NAEP Conference, and "Postscript to Standards and Criteria," a paper presented at the 1977-78 Winter Conference on Measurement and Methodology in Los Angeles, California.

4. Huynh, H., "On Consistency of Decisions in Criterion-Referenced Testing," and Subkoviak, Michael, "Estimating Rehability From a Single Administration of a Criterion-Referenced Test," both in the Journal of Educational Measurement, Winter 1976.

5. Greene, Leroy F., "The State Assessment Question - An Answer," Compact, Winter 1977.

6. Harman, David, The "Right to Read": An Assessment, September 1975.

7. Bloom, Benjamin S., Human Characteristics and School Learning (New York: McGraw Hill, 1976).

8. Oregon Department of Education, Elementary-Secondary Guide for Oregon Schools, Part I, Minimum Standards for Public Schools, 1976.

9. Brickell, Henry M., Seven Key Notes on Minimal Competency Testing, a paper presented at four regional workshops for the Education Commission for the States and the National Institute of Education, October 1977.

APPENDIX

1. Excerpts from the Minimum Standards
2. Oregon Graduation Requirements

MINIMUM STANDARDS
(Adopted 23 June 1976)

Definitions

Definitions

581-22-200 The following definitions apply to Oregon Administrative Rules 581-22-200 through 581-22-300, unless otherwise indicated by context:

(1) "Analyzing": mental processes by which individuals identify interrelationships within an entity and develop ability to make new applications;

(2) "Assessment": activities designed to secure and organize information describing student performance in specified subject matter at a given time;

(3) "Board": the State Board of Education;

(4) "Career Education": learning experiences enabling students to make career choices and develop attitudes, knowledge and skills needed for the producer (occupational) life role and for related aspects of other life roles. It includes awareness and exploration of work, preparation for occupations and specialization in a specific occupation;

(5) "Citizenship/Government Education": study of structures and functions of government and the human relations skills and understandings necessary for individuals to work productively with each other;

(6) "Competency(ies)": a statement(s) of desired student performance representing demonstrable ability to apply knowledge, understanding, and/or skills assumed to contribute to success in life role functions. (Each statement usually covers related tasks, contains a performance (action) verb and describes an outcome from which verifiable standards of achievement may be determined. The statement may relate to several goals);

(7) "Computing": manipulation of math symbols through fundamental processes of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division;

(8) "Conditionally Standard School": a school having failed to meet provisions of the minimum standards but for which the local board has adopted and submitted a plan, subsequently approved by the Superintendent, for correcting deficiencies;

(9) "Consumer Education/Economics/Personal Finance": instructional activities to help students cope with consumer concerns in our economic system, including money management, credit, purchasing goods and services, and rights and responsibilities in the marketplace;

(10) "Course Goals": statements of desired learner outcomes for each course or unit of study in grades 9 through 12;

(11) "Credit by Examination": ascertaining student achievement for waiving course requirements and, if appropriate, granting credit;

(12) "Department": the Department of Education;

(13) "Diploma": the document a local unified or union high school district issues attesting to the holder's having:

(a) Demonstrated minimum competencies the local board has adopted for graduation,

(b) Completed requirements for earning the Board's 21 units of credit (OAR 581-22-226) and any additional units of credit the local board specifies,

(c) Completed 12 school years of educational experience, or the equivalent, as authorized by local board policies adopted in conformance with these rules;

(14) "District Goals": statements of broad, general learner outcomes a local district and its community see as desirable consequences of instruction and relevant to attaining Board Goals for Elementary and Secondary Education (OAR 581-22-201);

(15) "Elementary School": an organizational unit of any combination of grades kindergarten through 8;

(16) "Goals": statements of desired learner outcomes at various instructional levels (district, program, course);

(17) "High School": an organizational unit composed of any combination of grades 10 through 12 in districts providing a junior high school containing grade 9; any combination of grades 9 through 12 organized in a separate unit; grades 9 through 12 housed with grades kindergarten through 12; grades 7 or 8 through 12 if Department approved;

(18) "Junior High School": an organizational secondary school unit composed of any combination of grades 7, 8, and 9 organized separately from other grades in the system and Department approved;

(19) "Language Arts/English": communication disciplines contributing to skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening;

(20) "Middle School": an organizational elementary school unit composed of any combination of grades 5, 6, 7 and 8 organized separately from other elementary grades in the system and identi-

fied as a middle school with the Department;

(21) "Minimum Standards": rules for public elementary and secondary schools found in Division 22 of the Board's admistrative rules;

(22) "Nonstandard School": a school having failed to meet provisions of the minimum standards and within ninety days of the Superintendent's notification of deficiencies not having submitted a plan of correction or adhered to the plan of correction the Superintendent received and approved. A nonstandard school is deficient for purposes of ORS 327.103;

(23) "Performance Indicator": an established measure to judge student competency achievement;

(24) "Planned Course Statement": a course title, a course overview, course goals and, where appropriate, minimum competencies;

(25) "Procedure": a specified routine method to be followed in complying with requirements of administrative rules and in implementing board-adopted policies;

(26) "Process": specified actions which insure validity of the results of a procedure;

(27) "Program": a planned series of interdependent activities or services contributing to the attainment of a common goal or s t of goals;

(28) "Program Goals" (Instructional): statements of desired learner outcomes for each district instructional program in any combination of grades kindergarten through 12;

(29) "Program Goals" (Support): outcomes of a program in a school system to support the entire system or one or more of its components, usually stated in terms of service to be performed;

(30) "Program Improvement": using assessment and needs identification information in making program revisions that reduce needs identified;

(31) "Program Needs Identification": development and application of procedures for specifying and prioritizing differences between actual learner outcomes and desired outcomes of program instruction sufficient to warrant considering program revision;

(32) "Reading": purposeful thinking processes by which an individual interprets written symbols as meaningful words and ideas;

(33) "Required Courses of Study": instructional programs under OAR 581-22-218 through OAR 581-22-236 prescribed by ORS 326.051(d). Guides the Department develops and issues shall provide further definition of assistance for local program implementation;

(34) "Social Studies/History": systematic study of societies and their activities.

(35) "Standard School": a school having met provisions of the minimum standards.

(36) "Superintendent": the State Superintendent of Public Instruction;

(37) "Unit of Credit": successful completion of a minimum 130 clock hours of classroom or equivalent work identified as part of a planned course. Equivalent work may include independent study, work experience, and research time;

(38) "Writing": written representation of a language following a systematic order designed to clarify and express thought.

Goals

Goals for Elementary & Secondary Education

581-22-201 (1) The Board, in response to the changing needs of Oregon learners, sets forth six goals for the public schools.

(2) Conceived and endorsed by Oregon citizens, the statewide goals are designed to assure that every student in the elementary and secondary schools shall have the opportunity to learn to function effectively in six life roles: INDIVIDUAL, LEARNER, PRODUCER, CITIZEN, CONSUMER, and FAMILY MEMBER. Each goal suggests the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to function in these life roles.

(3) The statewide goals shall be implemented through the district, program and course goals of each local school district. These local goals are set by schools and communities together to fulfill a mutual responsibility for the education of every student. Because most of the knowledge and skills needed to function effectively in the role of LEARNER are acquired in school, the school has primary responsibility for helping students achieve this goal.

(4) Each school and its community should establish priorities among the goals to meet local needs, and allocate their resources accordingly. This process should provide each student with the opportunity to achieve the requirements for graduation from high school, and as much additional schooling as school and community resources can provide.

(5) Each individual will have the opportunity to develop to the best of his or her ability the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to function as a (an):

(a) "Individual": to develop the skills necessary for achieving fulfillment as a self-directed person; to acquire the knowledge necessary for achieving and maintaining physical and mental health and to develop the capacity for coping with change through an understanding of the arts, humanities, scientific processes, and the principles involved in making moral and ethical choices;

(b) "Learner": to develop the basic skills of reading, writing, computing, spelling, speaking, listening, and problem-solving; and to develop a positive attitude toward learning as a lifelong endeavor;

(c) "Producer": to learn of the variety of occupations; to learn to appreciate the dignity and value of work and the mutual responsibilites of employees and employers; and to learn to identify personal talents and interests, to make appropriate career choices, and to develop career skills;

(d) "Citizen": to learn to act in a responsible manner; to learn of the rights and responsibilites of citizens of the community, state, nation, and world; and to learn to understand, respect and interact with people of different cultures, generations and races;

(e) "Consumer": to acquire knowledge and to develop skills in the management of personal resources necessary for meeting obligations to self, family, and society;

(f) "Family Member": to learn of the rights and responsibilites of family members, and to acquire the skills and knowledge to strengthen and enjoy family life.

Accreditation

Administration of the Standardization Program

581-22-202 (1) The Board develops and issues minimum standards for Oregon public schools under authority of ORS 326.051. All public schools must comply with these minimum standards and Board administrative rules. These standards are not applicable to community colleges defined in ORS 341, except for program requirements for granting adult high school diplomas.

(2) The Superintendent initiates standardization visits to public elementary and secondary schools on a regularly scheduled basis and at other times as necessary. A public school desiring an official standardization appraisal at other than scheduled times shall present a written request to the Superintendent. The school will be classified after an official standardization visit.

Assignment of Standardization Classification

581-22-204 (1) An official standardization classification is assigned to each school in a district after Department personnel supervise an on-site appraisal.

(2) Classifications shall be:

(a) Standard school;

(b) Nonstandard school;

(c) Conditionally standard school.

(3) A local district with one or more nonstandard schools shall be found deficient and classified nonstandard and must submit a plan of correction to the Superintendent pursuant to ORS 327.103(3). The plan of correction shall provide specific steps to correct each deficiency, a completion date for correcting each deficiency and the date the local board approved the plan. When the Superintendent approves the plan of correction, the classification of the local district will become conditionally standard.

(4) A conditionally standard classification indicates a temporary status. Failure of the local district to meet terms of the correction plan shall cause the classification of the district to revert to nonstandard, until such time as it adheres to the plan or it amends and the Superintendent approves the plan.

(5) When a local district classified as conditionally standard has completed its plan of correction and district officials certify the district is meeting all provisions of these minimum standards, the Superintendent may change the classification of the district to standard.

Waiver Provisions

581-22-206 (1) In administering the standardization program, the Department shall encourage school districts to develop instructional programs exceeding minimum standards as well as carefully planned pilot or experimental programs. When a special program or independent textbook adoption necessitates deviation from the standards, a school district shall submit a description of its proposal and secure approval prior to implementing the change. Approval, if granted, will be for a specified time and may be followed by a Department evaluation of the program.

(2) When local district officials believe it not feasible to comply with a specific standard in a school or schools, they may petition the Superintendent for a waiver.

(3) The petition for waiver shall:

(a) Identify the specific standard for which the waiver is requested;

(b) Specify why the district cannot reasonably comply with the standard;

(c) Specify how the district is compensating to provide for the education, health and/or safety of the children affected;

(d) Identify a maximum time for which the waiver is requested.

(4) The Superintendent shall recommend to the Board approval of such waivers and deviations when the local superintendent provides satisfactory written assurance that district needs and intent of minimum standards are being met. The Superintendent shall specify the time any approval shall be in

effect.

(5) Petitions for waivers and deviations modifying requirements specified in the "Oregon Revised Statutes" shall not be approved.

Instructional Planning

Instructional Planning

581-22-208 Each local district shall adopt and implement a system of instructional program planning and assessment to provide for:

(1) Sets of goals including:

(a) District goals, adopted by the local board, by 9-1-76,

(b) Program goals contributing to achievement of district goals by 9-1-76,

(c) Course goals contributing to achievement of program goals by 9-1-77;

(2) Assessment in reading, writing and/or computing within three instructional programs by 9-1-79 and six by 9-1-81 and reporting results to the local community. Such assessment shall:

(a) Occur after determining if reading, writing and/or computing skills must be developed or applied for students to achieve program goals, and

(b) Use valid measurement procedures;

(3) Needs identification related at least to reading, writing and computing for programs assessed and setting priorities for addressing such needs by 9-1-80. This process shall include local board review of needs identified and priorities set;

(4) Policies and procedures for making program improvements by 9-1-80 at least in reading, writing and computing in programs selected for assessment.

Instructional Program

Educational Program

581-22-218 To provide all students opportunity to achieve district-adopted learner outcomes, requirements for graduation and personal goals through participation in educational programs relevant to their needs, interests and abilities, each local district shall by 9-1-79 adopt procedures to:

(1) Identify individuals' learning strengths and weaknesses;

(2) Provide learning opportunities for students responsive to their needs;

(3) Determine progress students make in their educational program;

(4) Maintain student progress records and report the information to parents and students.

Elementary Instructional Programs

581-22-221 Students in local districts having any combination of grades kindergarten through eight shall by 9-1-76 receive instruction in language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, health education, physical education, music education and art education. Local boards may grant exemptions when required by students' religious or cultural beliefs, or for students with special physical, sensory, or other handicaps.

Elementary Instruction Applicable to Required Competencies

581-22-222 Local districts shall by 9-1-77 establish procedures to insure instruction in any combination of grades kindergarten through eight to provide students with opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills applicable to minimum competencies required for graduation adopted for receiving schools.

Graduation Requirements (Class of 1977)

581-22-224 Each local district enrolling students in grades 9 through 12 shall offer subjects to enable students to meet the following graduation requirements for the graduating class of 1977:

(1) Three units (30 semester hours) in language arts/English;

(2) Two units (20 semester hours) in social studies. The social studies series requires courses in United States history/government and modern problems, or equivalent Board-approved work;

(3) Two units (20 semester hours) in health education and physical education;

(4) One unit (10 semester hours) in science;

(5) One unit (10 semester hours) in mathematics;

(6) Ten units (100 semester hours) in elective subjects unless local board policy prescribes additional work in certain subjects.

Graduation Requirements

581-22-226 (1) Each local district enrolling students in grades 9 through 12 shall implement Board-adopted high school graduation requirements beginning with the graduating class of 1978.

(2) Credit Requirements for high school program completion:

(a) Each student shall earn a minimum 21 units of credit in grades 9 through 12;

(b) Units of credit shall be earned in the following areas of study:

(A) Language Arts/English–3

(B) Mathematics–1

(C) Social Studies/History–1

(D) Citizenship/Government–1

(E) Science–1

(F) Health Education–1

(G) Physical Education–1

(H) Consumer Education/Economics/Personal

Finance–1

(I) Career Education–1

(J) Electives–10

(c) Local boards may alter the number of units of elective credits;

(d) Local boards may establish additional credit requirements beyond the minimum number.

(3) Planned course statements shall be written for courses in grades 9 through 11 by 9-1-76 and in grade 12 by 9-1-77 and shall be available to students, staff, parents, local board, and interested citizens.

Diplomas and Certificates of Competency

581-22-228 (1) The local board shall award a diploma upon fulfillment of all state and local district credit, competency and attendance requirements.

(2) The local board may grant a certificate identifying acquired minimum competencies to students having met some but not all requirements for the diploma and having chosen to end their formal school experiences.

Performance Requirements for Program Completion

581-22-231 (1) Student transcripts shall record demonstration of minimum competencies necessary to:

(a) Read, write, speak, listen;

(b) Analyze;

(c) Compute;

(d) Use basic scientific and technological processes;

(e) Develop and maintain a healthy mind and body;

(f) Be an informed citizen in the community, state, and nation;

(g) Be an informed citizen in interaction with environment;

(h) Be an informed citizen on streets and highways;

(i) Be an informed consumer of goods and services;

(j) Function within an occupation or continue education leading to a career.

(2) The local board shall by 9-1-76 adopt and make available to the community minimum competencies it is willing to accept as evidence students are equipped to function in the society in which they live. Students need not develop all competencies within the formal schooling process. Schools shall provide necessary instruction for those who need it. The local district shall identify performance indicators used for competency verification.

(3) The local district may alter performance indicators for competencies or the local board may declare a policy for granting waivers to substitute competencies appropriate to unique needs and abilities of individual students.

Attendance

581-22-232 (1) Twelve school years, beginning with grade one, of planned educational experience shall be required, except as local boards adopt policies providing early or delayed completion of all state and local program, credit and performance requirements.

(2) Local boards may adopt policies to allow credit by examination or allow credit for off-campus experiences.

(3) Local boards are encouraged to adopt policies allowing individual program completion in more or less than twelve school years.

(4) In any modification of the attendance requirements for graduation, the administrator shall consider age and maturity of students, access to alternative learning experiences, performance levels, desires of parents or guardians, and local board guidelines.

Developing Appropriate Electives and Additional Course Offerings Beyond State Minimums

581-22-234 Local districts are encouraged to develop elective offerings providing students opportunities to earn a minimum ten elective units of high school credit. As indicated in OAR 581-22-226(2), however, the minimum number of elective units of credit may be altered if the local district increases the number of required units of credit. These electives shall be structured in terms of identified student needs for diverse experiences in vocational, scientific, fine arts, modern language and humanities education.

Local District Responsibility for Implementation

581-22-236 Each local district enrolling students in grades 9 through 12 shall implement the competency component of its graduation requirements as follows:

(1) Establish minimum competencies and performance indicators beginning with the graduating class of 1978;

(2) Certify attainment of competencies necessary to read, write, speak, listen, analyze and compute beginning with the graduating class of 1978;

(3) Certify attainment of all competencies beginning not later than with the graduating class of 1981.

Administration

Operating Policies and Procedures

581-22-238 Each local district shall keep rules adopted pursuant to ORS 332.107 and operating

Oregon Graduation Requirements

Oregonians are making themselves heard about their public schools. A practical and hardworking people, they want their children to be able to cope with the demands of an increasingly complex society. This means that while they are in school, they should have opportunities to develop the competencies needed to meet real-life situations. In response to this need, the Oregon State Board of Education, adopted the state Requirements for Graduation as a part of the minimum standards for School District Accreditation.

In the fall of 1974, high school freshmen entered a new program of competency-based instruction. The diplomas they receive upon graduation will verify that they have learned and demonstrated the minimum competencies considered necessary for modern-day survival.

By 1978, the typical senior year may be dramatically different than it is today. Some of the seniors could be enrolled in a nearby community college full or part time. Others could be working in community service activities full or part time. And the others would probably remain in the school-based program.

Oregonians Speak Out

The new requirements replaced those of 1932 which were largely college preparatory in nature. They were developed between 1969 and September 1972 in a series of steps:

1. The State Department of Education, in cooperation with a marketing and research firm, conducted an assessment of Oregon's educational needs by sampling opinions of students and dropouts, educators and the public.

2. The State Board of Education and Superintendent of Public Instruction held a series of meetings, and a report was issued under the title, "Oregonians Speak Out." The Board received strong statements of public concern that the high school diploma had lost its credibility and that all students were not receiving training and instruction necessary for survival in a complex society.

3. The Oregon Association of Secondary School Administrators requested that the Superintendent of Public Instruction explore the possibility of revising high school graduation requirements into quality or performance standards.

4. A first draft of proposed requirements was developed, distributed and discussed in the fall of 1971. Elementary and secondary administrators, classroom teachers, board members, students, business and labor leaders all contributed to a much-changed second draft of the proposed standards.

5. The second draft was used as a basis for public hearings at five meetings of the State Board of Education. After statewide testimony, the Board revised the second draft and adopted the new minimum standards at the September 1972 meeting.

6. Six pilot school districts developed guidelines and model competency statements. Approximately 300 Oregon educators and community members participated in these pilot projects.

7. A state-level workshop involving local project and State Department personnel was held in May of 1973 to synthesize the six project reports and develop guidelines for local districts.

   Districts were asked to file their implementation plans for State Board approval by July 1, 1974.

Contemporary Life Roles

Far too many current educational rules and regulations have been based on the needs of society 40 and 50 years ago. The society of 1975, with its credit cards, installment purchasing, high-speed automobiles, television and other modern developments, requires different individual competencies than the society of the 20's and 30's.

The traditional high school diploma has been based on two legs - attendance and course requirements. These two features will still exist to some degree under the new requirements, but a third leg of demonstrated performance has been added.

What competencies will be needed during the remainder of this century? What kinds of competencies are required to cope with life as a citizen, wage earner, consumer and life-long learner?

The new requirements focus on real-life roles and the competencies needed to cope with those roles. Our reference point is the ability to perform real-life tasks - reading a newspaper, writing a letter for employment, reading maps and timetables, locating a library book, making change, computing interest rates, learning to swim, completing a simple income tax form, balancing a bank checkbook, knowing the basis of property taxes, demonstrating first aid procedures.

Compliance with the new standards should not be construed to encompass the total school experience. The development of competencies is only one part of schooling. Local schools are encouraged to offer broad experience in the fine arts, humanities, foreign languages and the usual college preparatory program.

Community members will have a better understanding of current as well as proposed school programs, because they will be informed and involved in planning and approving the changes.

In the new requirements competency(ies) is defined as:

> a statement(s) of desired student performance representing demonstrable ability to apply knowledge, understanding, and/or skills assumed to contribute to success in life role functions. (Each statement usually covers related tasks, contains a performance (action) verb and describes an outcome from which verifiable standards of achievement may be determined. The statement may relate to several goals);

The new requirements are:

For Students

- Completion of a minimum of 21 units of credit during grades 9-12 of which 11 must be earned in specified subject areas and 10 may be elective. Required areas are: Language Arts/English, Mathematics, Social Studies/History, Citizenship/Government, Science, Health Education, Physical Education, Consumer Education/Economics/Personal Finance, Career Education;

- Completion of 12 years of "planned educational experience" unless this is modified through locally-adopted policy allowing for early or delayed graduation.

- Successful demonstration of competencies in ten areas:

  (a) Read, write, speak, listen;
  (b) Analyze;
  (c) Compute
  (d) Use basic scientific and technological processes;
  (e) Develop and maintain a healthy mind and body;
  (f) Be an informed citizen in the community, state, and nation;
  (g) Be an informed citizen in interaction with environment;
  (h) Be an informed citizen on streets and highways;
  (i) Be an informed consumer of goods and services;
  (j) Function within an occupation or continue education leading to a career.

For Districts

- Identification of the competencies and the performance indicators the district is willing to accept as evidence that individual students have attained the specified minimum competencies;

- Development of elective offerings which are based on the needs of students and determination of whether additional local requirements will be added to the state minimums as a prerequisite for graduation.

- Development of mechanisms to assure that student progress towards competencies is carefully monitored and that appropriate instructional help is provided to those who need it;

- Development of record keeping systems to document student achievements of competencies which can be transferred to student transcripts that report the degree to which each student has achieved the specified competencies;

- Development of "course statements: for all courses offered at the secondary level relating to the graduation requirements (i.e., statements of goals, minimum competencies to be taught in the course, instructional options, assessment methods and so forth).

District Options

- Development of methods for allowing students the option of credit by examination;

- Development of policies and programs allowing for multiple approaches to course design, provisions for early or delayed graduation, off-campus instruction, access to alternative learning experiences and opportunities for requesting waivers from state requirements based on individual student needs;

- Adoption of policies allowing for an issuing of "certificates of competency" to those students who do not qualify for a diploma to inform the student, parent and others as to the degree to which such students have achieved specified competencies;

- Adoption of policies allowing the substitution of performance indicators for competencies or granting waivers to substitute competencies appropriate to unique needs and abilities of individual students.

After a review of the status of districts in preparation for implementing the new requirements the State Board has eased the standard. Districts may only verify competencies in the areas of reading, writing, listening, speaking, analyzing and computing for the classes of 1978, 79 and 80 but must verify all competencies by the class of 1981.